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Articles in Today's Clips

Tuesday, June 26, 2007

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Mom, boyfriend sentenced

FLINT

THE FLINT JOURNAL FIRST EDITION

Tuesday, June 26, 2007

By Paul Janczewski

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Richard Lake said his 3-year-old granddaughter often screams while recalling the "torture" she endured, and asks him questions for which he has no answers.

He said the child is in a special school for mentally challenged children and faces a lifelong fight "just to be normal."

"She'll live with this for the rest of her life," Richard Lake told a judge.

Minutes later, the people responsible for the child's agony - her mother and her mother's live-in boyfriend - were sent to prison for their roles in a child abuse case that left the then 21/2-year-old child with dozens of bruises and life-threatening injuries.

Even Genesee Circuit Judge Judith A. Fullerton asked Jessica A. Lake, 19, of Fenton Township how the abuse was allowed or overlooked.

"She's your own daughter, and you're her mother," Fullerton said. "I can't understand this as a mother."

But Jessica Lake said nothing.

Earlier, Jessica Lake pleaded to assault with intent to commit great bodily harm less than murder, a 10-year felony.

Fullerton sentenced her to 5-10 years in prison, exceeding the guidelines because of the extreme abuse the child faced and the duration of the injuries, which occurred over an extended period of time.

Later, she sentenced Christopher L. Rowand, 22, to 7 years, 11 months to 15 years in prison for his no-contest plea to first-degree child abuse.

"They're both at fault," said Richard Lake after the sentencings.

"If (Jessica Lake) didn't stop (the abuse), she's just as guilty as (Rowand)," he said.

Earlier, Richard Lake's voice quavered and he barely held back sobs as he told Fullerton about the outlook for his granddaughter's recovery.

He and his wife are taking care of the child now.

"I sat beside her bed for 13 days while she was in a coma," Richard Lake said.

"It's only by the grace of God and the hospital that she's alive," he said.

He said the child is undergoing speech and mental therapy.

Rowand read a letter of apology - of sorts - saying he does not understand how this occurred, but that there was no excuse for it.

He did not admit to causing any injuries.

"I'm not an abusive person," he said.

He also wrote a letter to Fullerton, criticizing his attorney, David Megdell, and accusing him of ineffective council.

Megdell told Fullerton he advised his client to accept the plea offer because he believed Rowand could have been convicted at trial and faced up to 30 years in prison.

As part of his plea deal, prosecutors did not charge him as a habitual offender for his two previous car-theft-related felony convictions. He also was on probation at the time of the abuse case.

Fullerton told Rowand the injuries did not occur by accident, as he claimed, and offered to allow him to withdraw his plea and take the case to trial immediately.

Rowand rejected that option and agreed to be sentenced.

The incidents occurred last November.

At an earlier hearing, Dr. Brian Nolan, chief of Hurley Medical Center's pediatric unit, said the girl was on a ventilator and in a deep coma in critical condition when he saw her Nov. 3.

He said she had a severe head injury and had numerous other injuries, old and new, covering her body, including apparent cigarette burns on her chest.

He likened the head injury to those he's seen on victims of car crashes who were not restrained by seatbelts.

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Ex-teacher convicted on 12 accounts of assault

Tuesday, June 26, 2007

GRAND RAPIDS -- A former Grand Rapids Public Schools teacher was convicted this morning on 12 of 15 counts of sexual assault against nine young male students, all younger than 11.

After a week-long trial, a jury spent a day deliberating before returning the guilty verdict about 10 a.m.

Taylor could be sentenced to up to 15 years in prison when he goes before a judge Aug. 16 for sentencing.

The 39-year-old Taylor, who worked as a music teacher, was accused of molesting the boys at Martin Luther King Academy, Buchanan Elementary School, Blythefield Hills Baptist Church in Rockford and at his home.

When the verdict was read, Taylor did not react and his family was unemotional. Some of the young victims' parents cried.

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Holland man nabbed in Arizona for sex with boy

Tuesday, June 26, 2007

By Nate Reens

The Grand Rapids Press

Police in Arizona say a Holland man flew across the country to meet and seduce a 16-year-old boy he met online at myspace.com.

Edward Lara-Gutierrez, 22, was arrested Saturday at a Tempe, Ariz., hotel after the teenager told his parents about the consensual rendezvous, and they contacted investigators.

Lara-Gutierrez allegedly admitted to the sexual encounter, said Tempe police Sgt. Mike Horn.

The teenager and Lara-Gutierrez began talking about two months ago on the Web site, which has recently come under fire for having sex offenders registered as users.

The computer chats led to phone conversations and a plan for Lara-Gutierrez to visit the boy in Arizona, Horn said.

The Holland man arrived in Phoenix on Thursday and allegedly stayed overnight in the hotel with the boy. He met the alleged victim's parents, who believed he also was a minor and that the two were staying at another friend's house.

Lara-Gutierrez is jailed on a felony charge of engaging in sexual conduct with a minor, an offense punishable by two years in prison. In Arizona, 18 is the age of sexual consent.

Horn said police continue to investigate the relationship between Lara-Gutierrez and his alleged victim.

The case, combined with Thursday's arrest of a Wyoming man accused of sexually assaulting a 14-year-old Grand Rapids girl, highlights the dangers of networking locations on the Internet.

"These things were created to link people for something good, and the bad guys have found another resource to do their dirty work," Horn said Monday. "It's another example that parents need to be nosy and check what their kids are doing on the computer.

"It doesn't matter if it's across town or across the country, there is risk involved. And for every one we catch, you don't know how many others are out there."

The Arizona case marks the second time in less than a week in which alleged local predators used the Internet to contact victims.

State police arrested Eric Scott Beintema, 37, last Thursday and charged him with third-degree criminal sexual conduct and using a computer to commit a crime. In that case, authorities said the girl believed Beintema was a 17-year-old and gave him her address and phone number.

The two met online at Teenspot.com, a page for young adults.

Authorities say chat partners never can be sure who they are talking to online and personal information should not be disclosed.



Detroit man charged with child abuse

June 26, 2007

By BOWDEYA TWEH

FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER

A Detroit man was charged Monday with attempted murder and first-degree child abuse on allegations that he choked his 4-month-old son and threw him into a glass table, said Maria Miller, spokeswoman for the Wayne County Prosecutor's Office.

Londell Swanigan, 22, of Detroit was arrested Friday by Detroit Police.

After throwing the baby into the table, it's alleged that Swanigan cut the baby with a piece of glass. The incident happened around 4:45 p.m., Miller said.

Family members in the home got Swanigan away from the child and called police, Miller said.

The baby was taken to a local hospital and treated for multiple cuts. The boy's name hasn't been released.

Swanigan is being held on a \$50,000 cash-only bond. His preliminary examination will be July 5 in 36th District Court in Detroit.

Contact **BOWDEYA TWEH** at btweh@freepress.com or 313-222-6513.

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KALAMAZOO GAZETTE

Doctor pleads to having child pornography

Tuesday, June 26, 2007

By Rex Hall Jr.

rhall@kalamazoogazette.com 388-7784

A longtime Dowagiac chiropractor has pleaded guilty to child-pornography possession, authorities said.

James R. McCanse, 58, pleaded guilty Monday in Cass County Circuit Court to four counts of possession of child sexually abusive material, Cass County Prosecutor Victor A. Fitz said.

The charges stemmed from an incident on or about Oct. 26 at McCanse's office in Pokagon Township, Fitz said.

The state suspended McCanse's medical license in April. McCanse, who has practiced in the Dowagiac area for 30 years, is free on bond until his Aug. 3 sentencing. He faces concurrent sentences of up to four years in prison on each count, the prosecutor said.

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June 26, 2007

Mount Clemens**Man in MySpace teen sex case pleads guilty**

He faces sentencing July 23 for relations with girl, who is pregnant; another man, mom already pleaded.

Edward L. Cardenas / The Detroit News

MOUNT CLEMENS -- The final defendant in an underage sex case involving a 14-year-old Utica teen pleaded guilty Monday to having sex with the girl, who is pregnant.

Chris Garcia, 21, pleaded guilty to two counts of third-degree criminal sexual conduct and failure to register as a sexual offender.

"He admitted to his guilt," said defense attorney Robert Plumpe.

"He wants to move on with his life."

The girl, who is in foster care, gained national attention last year for running away with a man she met on MySpace. Her mother, Tammy Fennell, pleaded guilty last month to fourth-degree child abuse for allowing her 14-year-old daughter to have sex with two men, including Garcia.

Fennell had allowed Garcia and a second man, James Przeadzki, to live in her Utica Manor apartment with her daughter. Fennell once called herself "Tammy Tokes" on her MySpace Web site and bragged about a life of drinking, pot smoking and debauchery.

Garcia, who is being held in the Macomb County Jail on \$1 million bond, will be sentenced July 23 by Macomb Circuit Judge Matthew Switalski. He could face up to 15 years in prison.

Once Child Protective Services found out about the girl's pregnancy, Utica Police began investigating. Officials said the girl and Garcia have had a relationship since last year. During the the relationship, he would pick her up from school and tell school officials that he was her fiance.

After Garcia pleaded guilty, Switalski asked him questions about the case, including if he had sex with the 14-year-old.

Garcia responded "multiple times."

Fennell was sentenced to two years' probation and a \$500 fine. She also will be allowed to have supervised visits with her daughter.

Przeadzki was sentenced June 14 to three years' probation by Macomb Circuit Court Judge Donald Miller. The 21-year-old had pleaded guilty in May to assault with intent to commit sexual penetration.

Przeadzki also must spend nine months in the Macomb County Jail and will have to register as a sex offender.

You can reach Edward L. Cardenas at (586) 468-0529 or ecardenas@detnews.com.

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June 26, 2007

Two men charged in separate attacks of kids in Detroit

Norman Sinclair / The Detroit News

DETROIT -- Two men accused of injuring children in separate violent acts were charged Monday with assault with intent to murder and attempted murder in the incidents.

Albert Calvin Holloway, 57, is accused of hitting an 8-year-old girl and 9-year-old boy with pellets from a sawed-off shotgun he fired at a car in the 6100 block of Avery on June 23. Wayne County prosecutors issued warrants against Holloway for assault with intent to murder, felony firearm, felon in possession of a firearm and possession of the sawed-off shotgun. The victims suffered nonlife-threatening wounds.

Londell Swanigan, 23, was charged Monday with attempted murder in a June 21 incident in which he is accused of throwing his 4-month-old son through a glass coffee table at a home in the 8500 block of Beechdale. He was also charged with child abuse and being a habitual criminal. The child was treated at Children's Hospital.

Holloway was ordered held on \$100,000 cash bond. Swanigan's bond was set at \$50,000. Both will return to court July 5 for preliminary examinations.

You can reach Norman Sinclair at (313) 222-2034 or nsinclair@detnews.com.

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June 26, 2007

Faith and Policy

Why you may be guilty of negligent homicide

Kent A. Van Til

You and I may be guilty of negligent homicide. While definitions vary from state to state, the charge of negligent homicide is brought against anyone who, by his or her inaction, allows others under his or her care to die.

So whom have we allowed to die? How about the 1,200 children worldwide who die every hour from preventable causes? The 2005 Human Development Report says that "The causes of death (for these children) will vary, but the overwhelming majority can be traced to a single pathology: poverty."

Do we know about these children who are at risk? Do we fail to perceive it? Do we fail to act upon this information?

If you, like me, are just working from day to day, raising a family, you are probably dimly aware of the plight of such children, but too preoccupied with your own affairs to do much about it. Or perhaps you too send an occasional check to a relief organization. But does sending an occasional check constitute responsible action in the face of grave risk?

I fear it may not. Our neglect or indifference in the face of these known and preventable deaths just doesn't seem right.

I grant that the children of the Sudan are not "under my care" to the degree that my own children are. But while our responsibility may be far less for the children of the two-thirds world, can we say we have no responsibility whatsoever for them? How about basics like food, inoculations or clean water?

Thankfully, the courts are too busy with people who have committed clear-cut crimes to pursue us. No court in the world will take up this case. We're safe.

But another court may take up such cases. "When the Son of Man comes He will sit on his throne in heavenly glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another. ... Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, I was a stranger and you did not invite me in,'" the Bible says in Matthew 25:31-32, 41-43.

Should this court convene, we will have a hard time arguing that we didn't know or that we couldn't do anything. The worldwide media make it hard not to know. And though we can't save all 1,200 children each minute, we could undoubtedly save many or even most via hundreds of relief and development agencies at work throughout the world. Recent estimates by such agencies suggest that for about \$200 a year, they can save one family from death and destitution.

Nevertheless, the deaths of the innocents go on. We do know, we could act and we generally don't. If there is a Final Judgment, I fear for our chances.

Kent A. Van Til is a visiting assistant professor of religion at Hope College in Holland and co-author of "Less Than Two Dollars a Day: A Christian View of World Poverty and the Free Market." E-mail comments to letters@detnews.com.

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Pratt charged with domestic violence against current girlfriend

Trace Christenson
The Enquirer

June 26, 2006

MARSHALL -- The former fiance of Mary Lands, who disappeared in 2004, was charged Monday with sexual assault and domestic violence against his current girlfriend.

Christopher Pratt, 39, was arraigned Monday on charges of third-degree criminal sexual conduct, felonious assault, interfering with an electronic communications device and domestic violence.

Pratt was arrested by the Michigan State Police on Sunday at his home on 15 1/2 Mile Road in Fredonia Township outside Marshall after the woman, 35, alleged he physically assaulted her, struck her with a chair and broke two telephones as she tried to call police.

During an interview with troopers, she said Pratt sexually assaulted her between June 10 and June 24, according to State Police Sgt. Dave Stamler of the Battle Creek post.

"It came up in the interview," Stamler said. "She said when she doesn't want to have intercourse he just takes it."

Pratt was arrested at his mother's house in Marshall a couple of hours after the woman's 10-year-old son went to a neighbor's house and called police about 3:05 p.m., Stamler said.

Troopers at the scene said they contacted Pratt by telephone. He refused to meet with officers for an interview but later was found, Stamler said.

Pratt was living with Lands, 39, in a Marshall apartment when he called police March 12, 2004, and said Lands had walked away from their home without her car, her keys or her cell phone after an argument and had not returned.

Pratt has denied he was responsible for her disappearance, though her family maintains he was involved.

Lands has never been found and police said they have no evidence she is alive. Marshall Public Safety Director Michael Olson said again Monday that Lands is a victim of foul play and Pratt is a person of interest in the case.

Marshall Police, the Michigan State Police and the Calhoun County Major Crime Task Force are investigating the disappearance. No one has been charged.

Olson said Pratt's arrest in the domestic violence case won't impact the investigation of the Lands' case.

When Pratt was arraigned Monday afternoon, Clifford Marshall, Lands' father, and Jim Carlin, a Battle Creek private investigator working on the case, were in the courtroom.

"This is what the people wanted to see," Marshall said after the arraignment. "It has been a long time coming, a matter of time. People should understand what we have been talking about for the last 40 months."

Su Harrington, who was married to Pratt for nine years until 1999 and also attended the arraignment, said she stopped at Pratt's house Sunday afternoon while police were there because their children were there. She offered to help the alleged victim.

Harrington said the woman's hand was bleeding and she was shaking.

"I just gave her a hug," Harrington said, describing Pratt as "extremely violent."

During the arraignment, Pratt seemed surprised at the sexual assault charge after Magistrate Roger Graves read it first.

"The first one, I don't understand," Pratt said. "I don't know what you are talking about."

Assistant Prosecutor John Puzzuoli told Graves that "there has been a period of ongoing domestic violence and abuse in the household" and said the woman was injured when Pratt threw a chair at her.

Graves ordered Pratt held on \$250,000 cash bond and scheduled a preliminary examination for July 2.

Trace Christenson can be reached at 966-0685 or tchrist@battlecr.gannett.com.

ClickOnDetroit.com

Grant in Court: Family Ordered To Keep Quiet

POSTED: 9:00 am EDT June 25, 2007
 UPDATED: 4:38 pm EDT June 25, 2007

MACOMB COUNTY, Mich. -- Both the Grant cases were in court Monday.

Stephen Grant returned for another pretrial hearing.

Grant's attorney asked the court to allow a private psychiatric examination to be conducted in Grant's jail cell.

Prosecutors said they question the defense's request to have the taxpayers pay for a private examination, when a state-employed psychiatrist should examine Grant first.

The judge hearing the case will issue a ruling on the request by noon Wednesday.

Last week, Grant's attorney entered a not-guilty plea on his behalf.

Grant is accused of killing and dismembering his wife, Tara, in February.

His trial is scheduled for Sept. 19.

Meanwhile, a judge presiding over the custody battle of the children of Stephen and the late Tara Grant Monday ordered both sides of the family to remain tight lipped during the remainder of the custody battle.

The sisters of both Stephen and the late Tara Grant are fighting for custody of the Grant children.

Tara Grant's sister, Alicia Standerfer, along with Stephen's sister, Kelly Utykanski, appeared in Macomb County juvenile court on Monday for a contempt of court hearing.

A Macomb County Judge ruled the sisters are no longer allowed to speak with the media regarding the case.

Only the court will be allowed to release information about the custody battle.

This stems from statements allegedly made by Standerfer's attorney regarding a so-called script.

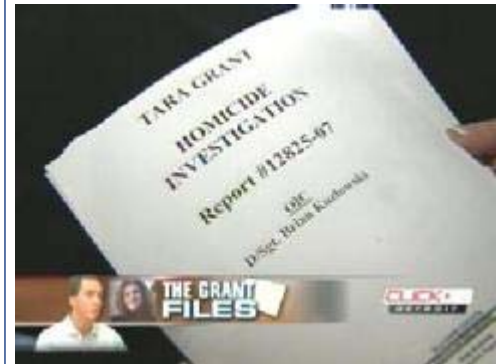
According to Utykanski, Standerfer's attorney, Patrick Simarski told local media that Stephen Grant provided Utykanski with a written script stating what she should tell the media.

Utykanski said her husband wrote her a list of items she needed to remember to tell the media.

Utykanski's attorney said the statements made by Simarski violated a court order that prohibits either side of making negative remarks about the other side.

Stay with Local 4 and ClickOnDetroit.com for further developments on both of these cases.

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KALAMAZOO GAZETTE

Private operator to reopen Lakeside

Tuesday, June 26, 2007

By Sarita Chourey

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A century-old Kalamazoo center for troubled youth set to reopen under new management next month could soon be treating more than 100 children sent from juvenile courts across Michigan and possibly elsewhere, its new director says.

Lakeside for Children, which suspended operations last summer, will reopen July 9 under a private operator that promises closer relationships with the community and more transparent operations.

"We're a for-profit company, but we like to say we have a nonprofit mentality," said Travis Faulds, of Sequel Youth and Family Services. Faulds is Lakeside's new executive director.

Faulds told Kalamazoo Gazette editors and reporters Monday that he expects Lakeside to become "the crown jewel" among Sequel's locations, which include four facilities in Iowa, Wyoming and Arizona serving about 700 at-risk youths. Lakeside's local board of directors will continue to hold the license for the facility, while former Lakeside Executive Director and longtime Kalamazoo County Juvenile Home Director Don Nitz will serve as the board's liaison with Sequel.

Lakeside, which remains licensed to treat up to 79 youths, was housing just 15 children when its board suspended operations last August because of severe financial constraints.

Lakeside, which opened in 1907 as an orphanage for boys, in recent years served abused and neglected children who had been referred by courts, Kalamazoo Community Mental Health & Substance Abuse Services and the Kalamazoo County Department of Human Services.

"Lakeside, over time, the population they served, was more of the mental health and severely abused," Nitz said. "The kids we're bring in now are primarily conduct disorder."

Faulds said youths to be served now include those who have had significant behavior problems in schools, gotten into illegal drug activity and have been "significantly traumatized."

Starting July 9, a dozen male students ages 12 to 17 will begin living at Lakeside, located off Oakland Drive south of Whites Road. Faulds said Lakeside could "comfortably serve" 100 youths with its current facilities and may eventually serve about 125 youths after receiving state authorization.

The average stay at the residential treatment center is expected to be six to nine months. The facility will develop academic and vocational programs for residents and encourage competitive sports and leadership activities such as student government, officials say.

The first group of youths to move into Lakeside will be boys who are succeeding at Sequel's other facilities and are close to graduating, Faulds said. Sequel has 122 Michigan youths at its other facilities, some of whom will be coming to Lakeside, he said.

"We are going harness that and take advantage of their leadership skills and their influence over their peers," he said. "We empower them and have them mentor and coach and work with new referrals. ... Their role is starting this on the right foot."

That mix would someday include both boys and girls, Faulds said. A staff of 24 has already been hired, including six workers who had been laid off from Lakeside last year. The facility is eventually expected to have 80 to 100 people on staff, he said.

“One of the huge things this community will see will be the investment,” he said. “We will not be a closed campus that keeps people off the campus. We will be out there cleaning parks, serving meals at soup kitchens, delivering Thanksgiving baskets -- teaching our students how to give back.”

Faulds, 37, has worked for Sequel since February and holds a master's degree in counseling and psychology from Western Michigan University. He previously directed a juvenile home and juvenile programs in Ingham County. He said he plans to commute to Lakeside from his home near Lansing.

Sequel will negotiate payments for treatment of children with court systems in counties that refer youths to Lakeside. Amy Upjohn, Lakeside's board president, said she and other officials considered other business models and visited Sequel's other facilities before agreeing on a 10-year contract with the company.

“I had the opportunity to spend time with students and with direct-care staff without administrators in the room,” Upjohn said. “It was phenomenal. They were honored to have the chance to change things in their lives and make a difference.”

Lakeside closed in June 2004 after a state investigation of several disturbances at the center. Its license was restored by the state in January 2005.

Faulds said openness will be a hallmark of the new management.

“One of the things we take pride in is we are transparent,” he said. “This is a very tough field to work in. You can't be perfect all the time. When there are glitches, we are going to address it.”

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June 26, 2007

Woman sentenced in case involving malnourished daughter

Associated Press

FLINT -- A woman whose malnourished, developmentally disabled 22-year-old daughter was found wearing only a T-shirt and four soiled diapers was sentenced Monday to a year in jail in the case.

Theresa E. Terrell, 44, of Flint, pleaded no contest last month to second-degree abuse of a vulnerable adult. A no contest plea is not an admission of guilt, but is treated as such for sentencing purposes.

Genesee County Circuit Court Judge Richard B. Yuille also ordered Terrell to serve three years of probation.

Terrell had no comment before sentencing.

Terrell was arrested in December after police found her malnourished daughter on a mattress stained with urine and feces in a bedroom. Officers had gone to the home to look for a man in an unrelated assault complaint.

The young woman weighed 43 pounds and was taken to a hospital, but has since been released and has gained weight. She is living with her father and attending a school program for the developmentally and physically disabled.

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Letter

Managed care helps state Medicaid save money

The June 12 editorial "Michigan must control runaway Medicaid costs" said "Michigan's health maintenance organizations were supposed to help contain costs, but it hasn't worked." Nothing could be further from the truth.

On an annual basis, up to \$400 million is saved in the Michigan Medicaid program through management of care by Michigan's health maintenance organizations compared with delivery of the same services in the regular Medicaid program. Further, this care results in greater access to primary and preventive services and improved health status.

We take pride in the fact that 10 of the top 50 Medicaid health plans in the nation are here in Michigan as documented by the National Committee on Quality Assurance. Unfortunately, even though Medicaid health plans serve two-thirds of the Medicaid population, about three-quarters of the costs occurs in the delivery of services to those not enrolled in managed care and therefore, the cost-effectiveness of this delivery system is not applied in high-cost areas.

Due to the increased enrollment in Medicaid and costs occurring elsewhere in Medicaid, the annual savings produced by Michigan's health maintenance organizations are sometimes lost due to the increased costs that are attributable to enrollment.

We agree that changes should occur, and more incentives that focus on preventive care need to be introduced into the system. In promoting change, we should not turn our back on programs that have demonstrated cost-effectiveness and accountability both to their members and the public.

*Richard Murdock
Executive Director
Michigan Association of Health Plans
Lansing*

The right to marry? It's still a battle

June 26, 2007

BY DESIREE COOPER

FREE PRESS COLUMNIST

Forty years ago this month, Mildred Jeter, 18, and Richard Loving, 24, drove from Virginia to Washington, D.C., to get married. They left Virginia because their union was illegal there -- Richard was white and Mildred was black.

Just nine days after the Lovings returned home, the sheriff barged into their house at night and arrested the honeymooners in their bed. What the Lovings didn't know was that it was also illegal for them to re-enter the state after evading Virginia's miscegenation laws. Richard spent a day in jail before being released on bond. Because she was black, Mildred, who also was pregnant, was held five days.

When I hear about their plight, I think how sad it is that, 40 years later, gays are fighting for the same right to marry.

Equality at the altar

On July 13, 1958, the Lovings pleaded not guilty, jump-starting a legal battle that went all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court. They lived in exile from their Virginia family, raising their three children in D.C. and waiting on justice. It arrived almost exactly five years later when the high court affirmed the Lovings' right to live in matrimony.

The Lovings heard all the arguments against their love. It was morally repugnant. It was an abomination before God. It violated the norms of our society. It was disgusting. But even after they won in the Supreme Court, the cross burnings and angry mail never rattled their commitment to each other.

Stanford University sociologist Michael Rosenfeld estimated in 2005 that more than 7% of all American married couples are interracial, up from 2% in 1970. Thanks to the Lovings, miscegenation laws now seem ridiculous.

Equally ridiculous are laws preventing consenting adults from marrying on the basis of their sexuality. As the Supreme Court said in Loving, "Marriage is one of the basic civil rights of man." How do we justify denying that right to an entire segment of our society?

The Loving spirit

Richard Loving was killed instantly by a drunken driver eight years after the Loving decision. Mildred Loving, who was blinded in one eye in the accident, continues to live in Caroline County. She's a grandmother now. She never remarried.

I suspect that when she heard the news from Massachusetts earlier this month, she was elated. Massachusetts is the only state in the union that has fully recognized same-sex unions. On June 14, the state legislative body refused to let voters decide on a constitutional amendment to ban gay marriage. At least in one state, civil rights won't be reduced to a popularity contest.

On June 12, the 40th anniversary of the Loving decision, Mildred Loving issued a rare statement, according to the advocacy group, Freedom to Marry:

"Not a day goes by that I don't think of Richard and our love," said Mildred Loving, 67. "I believe that all Americans, no matter their race, no matter their sex, no matter their sexual orientation, should have that same freedom to marry."

When it comes to civil rights for all, she's still waiting patiently for America to say "I do."



KALAMAZOO GAZETTE

Kalamazoo Kings, Loaves and Fishes team for drive

Tuesday, June 26, 2007

Gazette Staff Reports

Loaves and Fishes and the Kalamazoo Kings are joining forces Sunday to create awareness and raise food and funds to fight hunger in Kalamazoo County.

The Kings will host Independence from Hunger at their home game at Homer Stryker Field, in Mayors' Riverfront Park in downtown Kalamazoo.

The game starts at 2:05 p.m., and tickets are available through the Kalamazoo Kings or through Kalamazoo Loaves and Fishes.

Up to several days before the game, partial proceeds from tickets bought through Loaves and Fishes will directly benefit the organization.

This year, Loaves and Fishes is celebrating its 25th anniversary. Officials of the group say that since it started a quarter-century ago, the need for emergency food supplies has increased 200 percent because of rising unemployment and poverty rates.

Officials of Loaves and Fishes and the Kalamazoo Kings said the Sunday event is designed to both raise hunger awareness and encourage the community to fight back against increasing hunger in Kalamazoo, especially during the summer.

The need in summer grows, officials said, because as schools let out, demand for emergency food supplies increases dramatically.

Many families depend on schools' free- and reduced-lunch programs to provide essential nutrition to their children, they said.

With school out, many families must turn to Loaves and Fishes. Yet donations to Loaves and Fishes hit all-time lows during the summer months, the officials said.

Loaves and Fishes staff will be at the Sunday Kings home game, accepting food and monetary donations. Loves and Fishes is especially seeking high-protein, nonperishable food donations such as peanut butter, tuna fish, macaroni and cheese and hearty soups.

Raffle prizes will be offered to donors.

For more information, call Loaves and Fishes at 488-2617, ext. 213, or e-mail intern@kzoolf.org.

Game tickets are \$5 a person.

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Lansing paper doesn't back down from state

HILLSDALE DAILY NEWS

June 25, 2006

The Lansing State Journal took a bold step on Thursday by publishing a database with the salaries of all state employees.

It is bold for two reasons. One, it's a shining example of the First Amendment in action, in the freedom of the press to hold those in power accountable and reveal what they do and how much they do it for.

Second, it's bold because the Journal risked angering a lot of state employees — and as one of the two main newspapers in the state capital, that's a precarious position in which to be.

The Daily News applauds the decision to publish the database, which is online at <http://db.lsj.com/community/dc/som/index.php>. We do not, however, applaud the reaction from state employees to the publicizing of their salaries.

Calling it an invasion of privacy, these employees have spoken out against the paper, with employees' unions urging state employees to cancel subscriptions in a protest against the newspaper. On Saturday, the Journal printed a story saying at least 100 had already canceled subscriptions and that a full-scale boycott was on the way.

Apparently, these employees who are upset forget that we pay their salary. Our paychecks, your tax dollars, go into these people's pockets. We have every right to know how our money is being spent and it's unethical to try to hide that.

It is public information. Anybody can and should know. Here are some examples of how much our state leaders make, according to the database:

- Gov. Jennifer Granholm: \$177,000, plus a \$60,000 expense account
- Lt. Gov. John Cherry: \$123,900, plus a \$20,000 expense account
- Supreme Court justices: \$164,610 each
- State senators and representatives: \$79,650 per year plus a \$20,000 expense account
- Attorney General Mike Cox: \$124,900
- Secretary of State Terri Lynn Land: \$124,900

The database lets people search by state department, name or county. A glance at Hillsdale County-based state employees shows the following top salaries:

- Timothy Kelly, Department of Human Services program manager: \$73,267

- Michelle Stuck, State Police sergeant: \$69,091
- Douglas J. Schutter, State Police sergeant, \$67,755
- Laura Nye, Department of Human Services program manager, \$66,335

Again, we reiterate this is public information. Anyone has access to these records and, through a simple Freedom of Information Act request, any member of the press or public can get them. Or, they can now simply visit the database online.

We understand the claim that this is an invasion of privacy, because few people want their paycheck amounts made public. We also understand that if this information is available, why not a public database of city employees, or welfare recipients, or teachers? All are valid ideas, because all are taxpayer-funded.

State employees know full well that they are public employees and everyone has a right to know their salary.

Whether the Journal should have done this a matter of opinion. But they had every right to do it and the public has every right to know. Kudos to the Journal for taking such a bold step. Shame on those state employees who are excoriating them for it.

www.record-eagle.com

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Prosecutor withdraws from case

BY VICTOR SKINNER

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BEULAH — Manistee County's prosecutor has withdrawn from a highly publicized theft case in neighboring Benzie County, less than a month before trial was set to begin.

Manistee Prosecutor Ford Stone was assigned to handle a misdemeanor thefts case against state Department of Human Services employee Elaine Saffron because of a potential conflict of interest involving Benzie Prosecutor Anthony J. Cicchelli.

But Stone withdrew suddenly, leaving Saffron's July 19 trial in question. She was charged following a state police and Benzie sheriff's probe into thefts from the county's government center.

She is accused of stealing a laptop computer.

The probe also involved former Benzie maintenance supervisor Donald Zaleski and janitor Alan Blattner. Cicchelli declared a conflict of interest because of his friendship with Zaleski, who died in a car crash near Frankfort in December.

Blattner subsequently pleaded guilty to a misdemeanor charge for stealing electricity to run a secret tanning bed in the janitor's shed.

"The conflict was removed because my prosecution of the two county employees was over," Stone said. "So the attorney general agreed with me ... and the county prosecutor could finish the case."

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Stone asked to be removed from the case "about two weeks ago." The request came shortly after Benzie County Sheriff Robert Blank released to The Record-Eagle and Benzie County resident Eric VanDussen a videotaped interview of Zaleski. Stone contended the video could interfere with Saffron's trial, records show.

Stone said the dispute over releasing the video had nothing to do with his withdrawal from the case.

"I just had to do with my own caseload and the reason for my appointment had ended," he said.

Cicchelli requested Saffron's file from Stone last week and said he will re-evaluate the case before deciding whether to take the case or if he can be ready for trial by July 19.

"(Stone's) request was filed with the attorney general's office and I was notified last week that the request was granted," Cicchelli said. "I am not all that familiar with the particulars of her charges. I only gave it a cursory review when it was brought to me initially. What's next in the case is for me to review the file and see if we can hopefully be ready for trial."

"It is a pretty straight-forward case and a month should be plenty of time to prepare for a trial," Stone said.

Saffron's attorney, James Hunt, argued a change of venue for the trial Monday, but district court Judge Brent Danielson did not rule on that motion, records show.

"We all sort of decided to wait until the jury was being picked to see if the pre-trial publicity has affected the jury pool. It's a hard thing to tell," Cicchelli said.

Hunt did not return a message for comment.

Saffron, who was suspended with pay pending the criminal complaint, could face up to 93 days in jail and ordered to pay up to three times the amount stolen if convicted, records show.

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DHS and state courts receive high marks on audit of foster care system

June 25, 2007

LANSING – The Michigan Department of Human Services and the state's courts are doing an excellent job of getting foster care youths and families the support they need, according to a federal audit.

The audit, conducted by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Administration for Families and Children, examined Michigan's use of Title IV-E foster care funds, which account for more than 50 percent of the dollars spent on foster care in Michigan. In fiscal year 2006, these federal funds provided \$69.7 million to support, protect and care for foster children in Michigan.

The results of the audit are a major accomplishment for DHS and the Family Services Division of the State Court Administrative Office (SCAO).

"Exemplary is the collaborative relationship between DHS and the state court," the audit stated. "The ongoing collaboration ... is a strong mechanism to foster the understanding of the need for and timely occurrence of appropriate and meaningful judicial determinations for children with both the child welfare and legal communities."

Auditors looked at 150 cases; only four contained errors in determining eligibility. For a secondary review, states must remain below a 10 percent error rate to be in substantial compliance; Michigan's error rate was 2.67 percent.

"This is an outstanding example of cooperation and collaboration between the department and the state's courts," said DHS director Marianne Udow. "These funds are critical to help stabilize children and their families. We are grateful federal auditors recognized our efforts to maintain the integrity of the program as we protect and care for our youngest, most vulnerable citizens."

The audit particularly noted the efforts of DHS staff members working under the leadership of project manager Bill Dodge.

The audit also reviewed court orders issued by family courts in the case files and praised the lack of any errors related to court orders.

"The state would not have had this success without the wholehearted support, and diligent efforts, of chief judges and family court judges throughout Michigan," Michigan Supreme Court Chief Justice Clifford W. Taylor said. "Indigent foster children were the ones who were going to suffer most if the state failed the audit, and the courts recognized that."

Taylor also praised Justice Maura D. Corrigan, who began working on the audit while chief justice; Steven D. Capps, deputy director of SCAO's Family Services division; and Kathryn A. O'Grady, former director of SCAO's Child Welfare Services division and now a DHS deputy director.

"This success is due in large part to their hard work and commitment," he said.

For more information, go to www.michigan.gov/dhs